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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED CAPTIONS
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SUBJECT: PRC NOMINEE TO THE SECRETARY'S 2010 INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

REF: SECSTATE 111471

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1. (U) Embassy Beijing is pleased to nominate Guo Jianmei for the 2010 Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage. In her long battle to provide Chinese women with equal rights, protections and opportunities, Guo Jianmei has established herself as a trailblazer and first-generation women's rights lawyer in China. She walked away from a comfortable career to establish a center to provide free legal aid for disadvantaged women only six years after the Tiananmen crackdown, a time when non-government organizations (NGOs) in China were few and the government was extremely critical of civil society entities that challenged the status quo or cast a negative light on PRC society. Guo Jianmei is recognized as an engine for change in Chinese legal reforms, especially as related to women. Her tireless efforts to speak out against traditional views of women and girls, fight domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, and safeguard the rights of women have resulted in major changes in government policy and law. Guo long has faced considerable obstacles in pursuit of her work. Recently, Peking University officials asked Guo to direct her legal aid center to stop public litigation or disassociate from the university. Guo Jianmei, with the support of her staff, has decided to leave the university and continue taking casework, a course of action that she deems to be the best means to push forward legal advocacy and reform.

2. (U) Nomination details:

Surname: Guo.

Given name: Jianmei.

Job title: Director, Lawyer.

Organization: Peking University Women's Law Studies and Legal Aid Center.

Date of Birth: October 13, 1961.

Place of birth/citizenship: Henan Province, PRC.

Address: Third Building of Qianhejiayuan, Rm #1304, 108 North 4th Ring East Rd., Chaoyang District, Beijing, China.

Phone number: 86-10-8483-3270.

Email: jianmei333@sohu.com

Passport number: Ms. Guo is in process of applying for a new passport, number forthcoming. Her old passport (G30021597) was recently stolen in Germany.

Languages: Mandarin Chinese; requires translation services for English.

3. (U) Justification:

Guo Jianmei is China's best known female lawyer and a trailblazer who 14 years ago established China's first NGO to provide legal aid to women, the Peking University Women's Law Studies and Legal Aid Center. The Center is the symbol of women's rights protection in China and under Guo's leadership has become a significant source of legal advocacy and reform.

Guo is helping drive the practice of public interest law in China, a role that has put her under considerable pressure, taking on benchmark cases to drive legislative and policy

reform in areas such as rural women's land rights, workplace gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence against women. Guo Jianmei has faced down regulatory and legal obstruction, social prejudice, and other difficulties to build a pioneering women's legal advocacy and reform NGO at a time when China remains fairly closed to and suspicious of civil society groups. In late November, Peking University instructed Guo to either cease legal casework, or disassociate the Center from the university; Guo has decided the Center will continue taking cases and is preparing to leave the university.

Guo Jianmei was born to teachers in a poverty-stricken area of rural China. The conditions in the village and the plight of the women that surrounded her left a profound impression, one that continues to drive her work today. Guo graduated in 1983 from Peking University's Department of Law and went on to work at the Institute of the Judiciary, the Legal Consultant Office of the National Women's Federation and the National Lawyers' Association China Lawyers Magazine. After attending the Fourth International Forum for Women Lawyers in 1995, Guo Jianmei established her legal aid center at Peking University, which has become China's most prominent legal aid center for women and a magnet for women legal activists and civil society leaders. Shortly after, Guo resigned her post as assistant editor at China Lawyers Magazine to devote herself to providing legal aid to women. Guo Jianmei met with stiff resistance and lost nearly all of her early cases due to what she characterizes as her underestimation of the challenges facing women seeking recourse in the Chinese legal system. She has explained that "a lawyer providing free legal aid to women is often regarded with contempt. But this only strengthened my resolve." Over time, Guo Jianmei found success through her sheer determination and persistence in pursuing fair and equal treatment of women in Chinese law and society. She refused to give up or bow to pressure, even when cases dragged on for

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years. Guo was one of the first persons, let alone women, to build a successful NGO in China focused on law and public policy related to women's issues and the disadvantaged. She achieved success by working openly and transparently with other NGOs, law firms, the university, the government, and civil society leaders to support the rights and interests of Chinese women. Through the Center, Guo launched programs in support of public policy reform and women's rights, established the first non-government website and hotline to provide legal services nationwide, and built a network of legal aid partners including anti-domestic violence advocates, lawyers, hospitals, public officials, courts, schools, media, NGOs and psychologists in 28 provinces in China.

Under Guo Jianmei's direction, the Center began to focus on five categories of lawsuits: protecting rural women's rights and interests regarding land use; job discrimination against women; protecting the rights and interests of female domestic workers; sexual harassment in the workplace; and domestic violence. To date, the legal aid center has provided free legal counseling services in over 80,000 cases, including nearly 3,000 class action law and public litigation suits. The issue of domestic violence in China continues to be an area of serious concern for Guo Jianmei. In 2001, she successfully pushed for the revision of China's Marriage Law, challenging PRC lawmakers to take another step away from a traditional patriarchal, Confucian view of women and girls. Guo also helped draft China's first domestic violence laws that are currently being considered by the PRC government. Guo believes it imperative that China revise relevant laws and formulate more sophisticated operational procedures regarding the handling of domestic violence cases to ensure that women across China's social classes receive equal treatment and benefit.

Guo Jianmei's long-standing association with Peking University appears to be coming to a close. In late November 2009, Peking University informed Guo Jianmei that if she and the Center continued taking casework, she would have to

disassociate the Center from the university. Despite the problems she is facing without the support of Peking University, Guo Jiamei has decided to continue public litigation work precisely because casework is the best means through which to push forward legal advocacy and reform, and ensure Chinese women the protections and rights they are owed.

¶4. (U) Guo Jianmei has been informed of her nomination for this award. She expressed gratitude to Embassy Beijing for the honor of representing the courage of Chinese women in their struggle for equal treatment under the law and in society. If chosen, she would welcome the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to accept the award.

¶5. (U) Embassy Contact: PolOffs Meredith Sumpter, phone: 86-10-8531-4381 or Tiffany DeSpain, phone: 86-10-8531-3538.
HUNTSMAN